

Six-Year Struggle Produces Documentary Film So Explosive That Someone Had It Suppressed

Theodore Charach describes the six years he has spent researching the assassination of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and marketing a documentary film of his findings as "a creative nightmare."

Charach's never-say-die efforts to prove that Sirhan B. Sirhan did not act alone in Kennedy's murder resulted in a full-length documentary film called "The Second Gun."

The film was finally bought by a major distributor, National General Pictures. It opened for a few days last fall in New York and Boston — to overwhelmingly favorable reviews.

Then the film was suddenly recalled and has never been released to national audiences.

Charach charges that Warner Brothers, which recently bought National General, is suppressing the film because of pressure from state and federal officials.

Warner Brothers spokesmen deny that the film is being suppressed.

The film and the investigation of the Kennedy assassination have been an obsession with Charach for the past six years.

WINNIPEG-BORN West Coast freelance journalist, Charach was in the Ambassador Hotel on the night of June 4, 1968, preparing on assignment for Continental Broadcasting News Service, a documentary film on the meteoric rise of Bobby Kennedy toward the Presidency. He heard Kennedy give his victory speech after winning the California Democratic presidential primary just before being ushered into a hallway toward another ballroom.

Crushed in the crowd, Charach himself heard the popping sounds of the shots being fired and clawed his way into the pantry area where Kennedy and five others had just been shot and Sirhan B. Sirhan was being subdued.

Immediately, Charach began interviewing witnesses. He hasn't stopped to this day.

He tracked down numerous witnesses in the assassination probe, including a moonlighting security guard who, during an interview with Charach, told a different story from the one he told the Los Angeles County Grand Jury and police agencies.

CHARACH'S SECOND GUN THEORY is based largely on the statements of Los Angeles County Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi and Pasadena, Calif., ballistics expert William Harper.

Noguchi claims that his autopsy on Kennedy showed he was killed by a shot fired from behind him at point-blank range, while some witnesses say Sirhan was in front of Kennedy and didn't get close enough to the senator to fire at so close a range.

Harper claims that bullets removed from Kennedy and a surviving witness, William Weisel, could not have been fired from the same gun.

Charach contends Sirhan's conviction "was a monstrous coverup comparable to what's happened in the Watergate affair."

"There's no doubt in my mind," he added, "that compelling evidence has been overlooked, that evidence has been manufactured and suppressed and destroyed."

Working with Beverly Hills attorney Godfrey Isaac, who for a time represented Sirhan, Charach first put together a long-playing record album of his findings, but he couldn't get it on the shelves.

Though record company officials called the recordings "brilliant and frightening," Charach said they feared police and government pressure if the record was distributed.

FINALLY. Charach teamed up with journalist-cinematographer Gerard Alcan

By TOM LUTZ
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and together they produced a full-length film tentatively called, "Who Killed Robert Kennedy?"

By now they had tied up a quarter-million dollars in investment and production of the film.

Famous people viewed the film, but still Charach and Alcan could not find a distributor for it. Otto Preminger saw it in New York, Charach said, and said he was so impressed that he feared for Sen. Edward Kennedy's life.

"I returned to L.A.," Charach told TATTLER, "and began a crusade to every independent film company. I was running around like a chicken with its head cut off."

Every company Charach contacted was afraid to touch it.

"They believed we had a phenomenal film," he said. "But they were afraid of the government — the police agencies, the Internal Revenue Service. They felt that they as big corporations would get too much static under an unhealthy atmosphere of a coverup in California. The ramifications were too great."

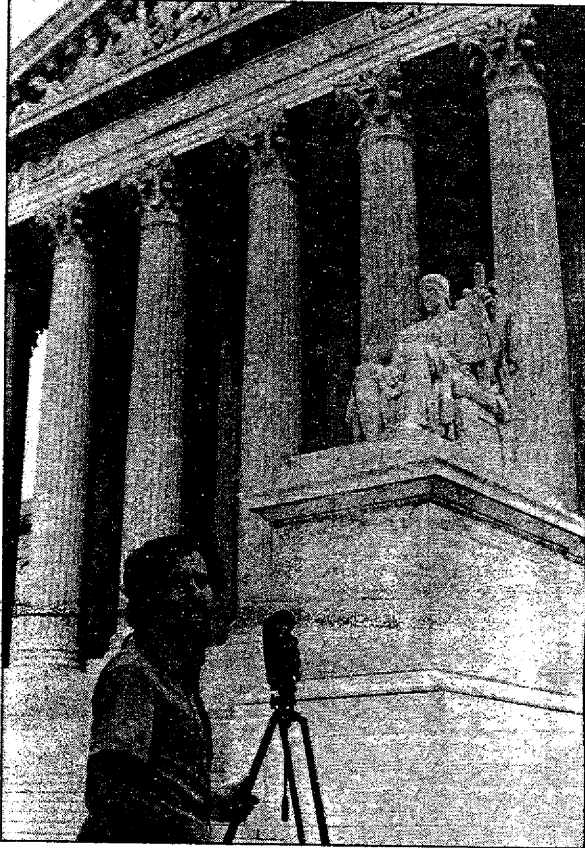
AT LONG LAST, Charach and Alcan signed a contract for National General to release the film. Now Charach contends that National General violated the terms of that contract by withdrawing the film after it had run only three weeks in New York.

Charach contends that the suppression of "The Second Gun" unfairly benefits two other films, "Executive Action," which was also seen last fall and "The Parallax View," which is yet to be released.

"Executive Action," based on the book by Mark Lane and Donald Freed, is a combination documentary-fictionalized version of the assassination of John F. Kennedy and "The Parallax View" is a Warren Beatty film about a political assassination.

Charach is still trying to spring "The Second Gun" loose for general distribution.

It should be well received if the reviews it received last fall are any indication.



GERARD ALCAN, journalist and cinematographer, shoots footage for "The Second Gun," shown briefly in New York City, then withdrawn from view for reasons unknown.

THE NEW YORK POST remarked: "It points not so much to a dark conspiracy against Kennedy as a shocking inefficiency among the investigating authorities."

Women's Wear Daily calls it "a mammoth documentary."

The Boston Evening Globe says, "The Second Gun" contains enough information to cause considerable doubt on the decision

holding Sirhan responsible for Kennedy's death."

Otto Preminger commented: "My initial skepticism was overcome completely about halfway through the film. It is a totally convincing, moving motion picture experience."

One day, America may yet get a chance to judge the film for itself.



THEODORE CHARACH, who has been spending his every moment investigating the assassination since he heard the shots that felled Bobby Kennedy in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on June 5, 1968. He's interviewing Sen. Ted Kennedy for the film here.